North Campus Open Space Restoration Project

Site

The North Campus Open Space (NCOS, 136 acres, 55.2 hectares) that includes properties previously called ‘South Parcel’ (SP, 69 acres, 27.9 hectares), ‘Whittier parcel’(3. 7acres, 1.5 hectares) and ‘Ocean Meadows Golf course’ (63.8 acres, 25.8 hectares); is part of the 264 hectare (652 acres) Ellwood-

Devereux Joint Management Area, created in 2005. The site includes the low-elevation former Ocean meadows Golf Course (OMGC) and the higher-elevation South Parcel (SP). Drainages from the west (Devereux Creek), north (Phelps Creek) and east drain through the OMGC to the COPR. The area is owned and managed by the UCSB except for a remaining private parcel on the east. There are also easements associated with a buried sanitary line, the Phelps Creek floodway and requirements to conform to perimeter drainage and roadways.

Project overview

The restoration project is being undertaken by the UCSB in partnership with multiple local, state and federal agencies. This project is being designed to enhance wetland and associated upland habitats characteristic of the historic Devereux Slough ecosystem. The overall project vision is to restore the opportunity for tidal connection to the site, enhance the expression and complexity of fresh and brackish wetland features and restore upland and wetland habitats, with the following Goals:

(1) Ecosystem Restoration: Enhance wetland and associated upland habitats characteristic of Devereux Slough ecosystem. To do so will require expansion of wetland area, improved hydrological connectivity, control of invasive non-native species, re-introduction of native species, enhancement of habitats for threatened and endangered species and improving resiliency of ecosystem structure and function.

(2) Provide Social Values: Maintain open space and develop opportunities for passive recreation, research and educational use that are compatible with the environmentally sensitive resources of the area.

Project description

The project will expand estuary lagoon and other wetland habitats, along with transitional and upland habitats, while providing public access and education. Approximately 350,000 cubic yards of earth will be excavated from the OMGC and placed on site generally in the SP. This earthwork essentially reverses the actions taken in the mid-1900s when upper Devereux Slough was filled with earth from the adjacent mesa to form the golf course, while leaving only a ditch-like creek channel to convey drainage through the site. The project will also remove a water control structure just upstream from the Venoco Road crossing. The site will be revegetated with native species to form diverse 1 array of habitat surrounding the estuary, which will resemble the existing lower estuary within the Coal Oil Point Reserve (COPR). The project watershed is shown in figure 1, the grading plan is shown in Figure 2 and the habitat-vegetation plan is shown in Figure 3.

CCC Role

CCC potential involvement would be with assisting in the planting of diverse habitats including salt marsh, coastal sage scrub, riparian and native grassland habitats. Timing for involvement would be January 2017 – August 2018.

Project benefits

Project will provide multiple benefits including support for threatened and endangered plants and animals (Ventura marsh milk vetch, coastal goldfields, tidewater goby, western snowy plover, California least tern, California red-legged frog, western pond turtle and multiple special status and migratory birds including Belding’s savannah sparrow and a variety of herons and birds of prey), restoration of habitats that have experienced significant decline over the past century (estuarine habitats, vernal pools, back dune swale), restoration of hydrological function and increased tidal prism which will provide water storage, water quality and flood storage capacity functions (> 90 ac feet). Project includes important public access components through a diverse trail system and wildlife observation features which will benefit disadvantaged communities (as defined by CDFW circular), students of UCSB and Isla Vista School through education, access to beaches and open space, opportunities to exercise (e.g. health and wellness benefits). Project will study and support the sequestration of carbon in salt marsh habitats and provide a site for increased studies regarding sea level rise, restoration, carbon sequestration and wildlife behavior. Project is designed to accommodate sea level rise and will buffer the loss of important, diverse estuarine habitats to the forces of sea level rise.





